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ABSTRACT

This paper is the follow-up and concluding study to a previous publication (summer 1998) that depicted assessment on all levels of education as being too complex. This current document reviews collaborative efforts between public postsecondary institutions and coordinating boards of higher education to survey 2,363 alumni from Missouri's community colleges, and compares the results with a separate survey from Crowder to its alumni. The purpose of the Crowder survey was to mirror a portion of the former collaborative study without exact replication. The questions on the Crowder survey concerned services like financial aid, advising, bookstore, intramurals, and accomplishments such as knowledge within major, intellectual enhancement, accrued abilities, and appreciation for academic subjects. Findings showed that Crowder's cohort consistently indicated greater levels of satisfaction than the sample surveyed in the collaborative survey. Included in this document is the Crowder College Survey of Outcomes Spring 98 and State Two-Year Study (collaborative) contrasted. (AS)

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ASSESSMENT DESIGNS AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGES REVISITED

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JC 980 442

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Enclosed is the follow-up and concluding study to a previous publication (summer 98) entitled: *ASSESSMENT DESIGNS AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGES*. In it, we asserted: "Assessment on all levels in education has become a labyrinth of complexity. From national accreditation reviews spiraling downward to departmental and classroom implementation, assessment pervades education, and rightfully so."

From there our take-off point was the exploration of collaborative efforts "between public post-secondary institutions and their coordinating boards of higher education." Although well-intended, the joint study has flaws. Areas in need of critiquing are: sampling methods, delivery, data aggregation and other needful checks and balances.

The collaborative effort utilized a mail-out survey to 2,363 alumni. The response rate average among the twelve districts was 23.25% or 549 individuals.

Currently, Missouri's Community Colleges have 73,402 students "enrolled in credit courses," according to the Missouri Community College Association. Assuming a modest graduation rate of 33 percent of 73,402 or (24,442), a population of 549 individuals represents only a .0224 percent sampling. Consequently, a sample of 88% (the sample utilized by Crowder College) reflects data that is far more reliable than a two and a quarter percent sample. Additionally, the research data supplied through the collaborative effort yields the startling fact that only twelve individuals (alumni) from Crowder participated in the study.

Further, it is not precisely known how recently the "alumni" graduated. In any case, when only twelve individuals are mixed with a "cohort" *(actually a cohort is not the correct designation due to the fact the sampling mixes individuals of different time frames...consequently of different societal impacts, etc.)* of twelve diverse college campuses, there is no realistic representation of the uniqueness of a particular campus. The aggregating of rural and metropolitan data "spoils the broth." Individual campus nuances are lost, totally. Fractional sampling does an injustice to the individual campus and the collective whole.

Nonetheless, of course, current graduating sophomores (Crowder Survey) have less "information atrophy" about their respective "community college" experience than alumnus from indefinite time period's past. Perhaps, this fact is represented by the dismal survey return rate, in the collaborative effort, concerning their opinions of their college experiences.

Schools were provided the option of purchasing individual campus reports. The data would reflect only their school's respondents. However, I reiterate a sampling of 198 alumni-to-be (in two weeks) is far superior to twelve unknowns. The data for all practicable purposes can be construed to be unusable.

A "mail-in" survey has additional draw backs. It is only assumed the person who was addressed the survey actually completed it, and that it was administered under the same circumstances.

As we maintained in the prior study, "compromised techniques involved in data collection and their subsequent reporting capabilities," mar the integrity and usefulness of surveys. While the efforts are meritorious, methodologies lack the consistency to yield tangible results so necessary for the: public citizenry, educational officials across the spectrum, legislative bodies, and students themselves to draw compelling conclusions.

The questions on the survey are typical inquiries of students by colleges concerning services like: financial aid, advising, bookstore, intramurals, etc. and accomplishments such as acquired: knowledge within major, intellectual enhancement, accrued abilities and appreciation for academic subjects, and overall impression of academic offerings and facilities. Universities and institutions of higher education have polled students on these categories for years.

A comparison and review of the data shows that of the 49 survey questions administered, on only 6 occasions does the two-year Missouri aggregate average a higher combined favorable rating (A= very satisfied, and B= satisfied). This is calculated by collapsing the "A" and "B" responses together. On the other 43 questions, Crowder College's "collapsed average" is higher than the aggregate two-year findings.

While the purpose of this publication is not to purport that Crowder is superior to its' peer schools, the findings could be interpreted in that manner. However, I believe this could be an erroneous notion. In reality, it is subtle reminder of the flaws inherent in the collaborative study. Each school was equally under represented.

Consequently, for any and all comparisons between schools, use of the data has serious limitations. The collaborative study's findings are further skewed by the trend of making comparisons between the study's four-year and two-year school results. At best, this type of "gauge" is unreliable. The purposes and missions of the two types of school are altogether different. There are lines of similarity, but gulfs separate them, too!

The survey results that follow need some elucidation. In the study administered solely to Crowder students, there are 49 questions. The collaborative study contained multiple questions on a number of hierarchical planes; in all, close to two hundred questions. The purpose of the Crowder study was to mirror a portion of the collaborative study without exact replication. Hence, some of the questions posed to the Crowder only students were slightly reworded. Marginal nuances in wording were instituted to maintain the integrity of both survey designs. For all practical purposes, the questions were the same.

The reader will undoubtedly notice that some Crowder questions have more than one collaborative two-year survey response paired with them. First, as it was mentioned, the collaborative survey was more detailed than the Crowder survey. For the sake of reliability, some two-year questions are reiterated in a slightly changed form. Secondly, in order to fully provide every possible perspective or angle that can "shed light" on "comparisons." Included are all the two-year responses. The end result is: no matter how the question is phrased, Crowder's cohort consistently indicates greater levels of satisfaction. There's a couple of questions with no two-year response due to Crowder's initiative of soliciting information salient only to Crowder.

Additionally, for ease of interpretation, the levels of satisfaction compared are those of "very satisfied" and "satisfied." Differences in the other categories were negligible. Also, the two-year study added two additional categories of non-use or "blank." The use of seven "Likert" responses in the two-year study facilitates redundancy, plus "waters down" results by encouraging indecisive responses that further demonstrate intangible results.

As, in the prior study, we stated: "One can only imagine how department heads or other pivotal personnel and divisions would prefer to be revealed in results issued in a brochure or before an accreditation agency, etc. Numerous other comparisons/contrasts can be drawn. Simply put, reliance on fractional sampling may or may not mirror actual overall tendencies, but are far more likely to be skewed at some level."

In conclusion, we again affirm: "This brings us full circle to the reasons why current assessment practices are lacking in credibility. Institutions desiring the most explicit data for self-evaluation should consider the merits of techniques used, the inherent data limitations that accompany those associated methodologies, and the intrinsic restrictions of interpretation embedded in the assessment instruments of choice."

CROWDER COLLEGE
SURVEY OF OUTCOMES SPRING 98 AND STATE TWO-YEAR STUDY CONTRASTED

How has Crowder contributed to your progression (attainment) in the areas contained in the following survey? Please critique, also, services, personnel, and facilities. Your honest appaisal permits us to strive for excellence, too! Please indicate your level of satisfaction for the following questions using the scale below:

A = VERY SATISFIED
B = SATISFIED
C = DISSATISFIED
D = VERY DISSATISFIED
E = NOT USED / OR NOT APPLICABLE

** denotes total percentage of favorable responses combining "A" and "B"

1. The learning environment provided by Crowder.

Crowder
A= 34% B= 64% C= 1% D= 1% E= 0% **97%

2-year
A= 29.1% B= 47.1% **76.2%

2. My overall impression of the quality of a Crowder education.

Crowder
A= 29 B= 67 C= 2 D= 1 E= 0 **96%

2-year
A= 21 B= 48 **69%

3. Academic advising.

Crowder
A= 18 B= 43 C= 25 D= 10 E= 3 **61%

2-year
A= 19.9 B= 35.8 **55.7%

4. Course / class scheduling.

A= 9	B= 57	C= 28	D= 5	E= 1	**66%
2-year					
A= 23.1	B= 44.1				** 67.2%

5. Personal counseling services.

A= 13	B= 44	C= 14	D= 6	E= 23	**57%
2-year					
A= 6	B= 11.6				**17.6%
A= 12.4	B= 18.8				**31.2%
A= 19.5	B= 32.8				**52.3%

6. My ability to think introspectively, view evidence and facts and then decide.

A= 34	B= 58	C= 4	D= 1	E= 2	**92%
2-year					
A= 12	B= 31.5				**43.5%

7. Job placement services.

A= 9	B= 30	C= 7	D= 6	E= 46	**39%
2-year					
A= 15.8	B= 31.7				** 47.5%
A= 13.9	B= 19.7				** 33.6%

8. Financial aid services.

A= 18	B= 39	C= 12	D= 10	E= 19	**57%
2-year					
A= 24.0	B= 30.0				**54%

9. Student Services.

A= 19	B= 60	C= 14	D= 2	E= 5	**79%

10. Student Assistance Center: testing / assessment, tutoring, computers.

A= 30	B= 51	C= 4	D= 1	E= 15	**81%

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11. My ability to convey my thoughts orally and written.

A= 35	B= 58	C= 5	D= 1	E= 0	** 93%
2-year					
A= 18.8	B= 31.7				** 50.5%
A= 15.2	B= 27.4				** 42.6%

12. Reading ability and comprehension.

A= 37	B= 57	C= 3	D=0	E= 1	**94%
2-year					
A= 10.7	B= 22.3				** 33%

13. Study and test-taking ability.

A= 32	B= 57	C= 9	D= 2	E= 1	**89%
2-year					
A= 15.2	B= 27.6				** 42.8%

14. My appreciation of the humanities: art, theater, literature.

A= 22	B= 49	C= 10	D= 2	E= 15	**71%
2-year					
A= 13.1	B= 20.1				** 33.2%
A= 12.2	B= 29.1				** 41.3%

15. School newspaper.

A= 11	B= 53	C= 12	D= 3	E= 19	**64%

16. Food service / preparation.

A= 5	B= 26	C= 19	D= 12	E= 35	**31%

17. Computer facilities / availability.

A= 23	B= 43	C= 23	D= 7	E= 4	**66%
2-year					
A= 36.4	B= 39				** 75.4%

18. Career exploration / job fair / interviewing / resume.

A= 9	B= 38	C= 16	D= 6	E= 29	**47%
2-year					
A= 15.8	B= 31.7				** 47.5%
A= 13.9	B= 19.7				** 33.6%

19. Quality of instruction in your major area of study.

A= 41	B= 45	C= 10	D= 3	E= 1	**86%
2-year					
A= 20.1	B= 30.4				** 50.5
A= 21	B= 37.7				** 58.7

20. Library / Learning Resource Center.

A= 18	B= 53	C= 17	D= 8	E= 4	**71%
2-year					
A= 33	B=40				** 73%

21. Recreational opportunities.

A= 7	B= 29	C= 18	D= 9	E= 35	**36%
2-year					
A= 9.6	B= 17.8				** 27.4%

22. Off-campus course offerings.

A= 13	B= 27	C= 9	D= 3	E= 47	**40%

23. My academic goals have been attained.

A= 31	B= 55	C= 10	D= 1	E= 1	**86%
2-year					
A= 20.8	B= 44.1				** 64.9%
A= 23.8	B= 32.5				** 56.3%
A= 30.4	B= 30.2				** 60.6%
A= 24.8	B= 43.9				** 78.7%

24. My ability to pursue truth.

A= 39	B= 53	C= 1	D= 1	E= 5	**92%
2-year					
A= 19.5	B= 32.8				** 52.3%
A= 25.1	B= 28.5				** 53.6%

25. Having become increasing responsible and accountable.

A= 37	B= 55	C= 2	D= 1	E= 4	**92%
2-year					
A= 16.1	B= 28.5				**44.6%
A= 38.3	B= 22.3				** 60.6%

26. I've never felt discriminated against by faculty / personnel.

A= 30	B= 45	C= 13	D= 9	E= 3	**75%
2-year					
A= 17.8	B= 28.5				** 46.3%
A= 34	B= 38.5				** 72.5%

27. Wellness programs.

A= 9	B= 36	C= 9	D= 3	E= 40	**45%
2-year					
A= 6.9	B= 15.6				** 22.5%

28. College bookstore.

A= 26	B= 53	C= 13	D= 5	E= 2	**79%

29. Classrooms, furnishings, comfort, conducive learning environment.

A= 22	B= 54	C= 19	D= 4	E= 1	**76%

30. Out-of-class availability of instructors, office hours.

A= 21	B= 59	C= 12	D= 2	E= 6	**80%
2-year					
A= 25.7	B= 41.3				** 67%

31. My intellectual curiosity has become enhanced.

A= 30	B= 61	C= 6	D= 2	E= 1	**91%
2-year					
A= 13.3	B= 27.4				** 40.7%
A= 30.8	B= 31.3				** 62.1%

32. Awareness of a divergent society.

A= 23	B= 58	C= 9	D= 2	E= 8	**81%
2-year					
A= 14.8	B= 33.4				** 48.2
A= 15.2	B= 20.8				** 36%
A= 16.5	B= 22.5				** 39%
A= 22.7	B= 36.8				** 59.5%

33. My becoming an active citizen.

A= 26	B= 55	C= 8	D= 1	E= 9	**81%
2-year					
A= 16.1	B= 28.5				** 44.6%

34. My coping strategies dealing with change, varying: persons, opinions, requirements.

A= 31	B= 59	C= 5	D= 1	E= 4	**90%
2-year					
A= 25.7	B= 37.3				** 63%
A= 19.9	B= 27				** 46.9%

35. My ability to set future goals.

A= 39	B= 53	C= 2	D= 1	E= 3	** 92%
2-year					
A= 16.9	B= 27.4				** 44.3
A= 36.4	B= 28.1				** 64.5

36. My Listening ability.

A= 30	B= 58	C= 6	D= 2	E= 3	** 88%
2-year					
A= 18.6	B= 35.1				** 53.7%

37. Attitude of faculty toward students.

A= 27	B= 56	C= 9	D= 6	E= 1	**83%

2-year

A= 29.6	B= 46				** 75.6%

38. Attitude of other college staff towards students.

A= 15	B= 61	C= 15	D= 4	E= 3	**76%

39. Developmental / remedial services.

A= 7	B= 30	C= 3	D= 3	E= 55	**37%

2-year

A= 16.7	B= 34.3	** 51%
A= 32.3	B= 32.5	** 64.5%

40. Awareness of political / social issues.

A= 15	B= 62	C= 7	D= 2	E= 11	**77%

2-year

A= 18.4	B= 27.6	** 46%

41. Formulating purpose direction and meaning for myself and others.

A= 25	B= 64	C= 3	D= 1	E= 6	**89%

2-year

A= 15.2	B= 36.2	** 51.4%
A= 30	B= 31.7	** 61.7%
A= 28.7	B= 33.4	** 62.1%

42. Developing an interest and competence in raising a family.

A= 23	B= 42	C= 7	D= 2	E= 25	**65%

2-year

A= 31.3	B= 25.1	** 56.4

43. Understanding the importance and urgency of issues involving the aged.

A= 22	B= 54	C= 8	D= 4	E= 22	**76%

44. Lab facilities.

A= 19	B= 49	C= 18	D= 8	E= 2	**68%

45. Your appraisal of Crowder when being asked to recommend it to others.

A= 35	B= 54	C= 8	D= 1	E= 1	**89%

2-year

A= 21.6	B= 33.4	** 55%
A= 29.6	B= 42.4	** 72%

46. There was concern for me as an individual.

A= 23	B= 53	C= 13	D= 3	E= 7	**76%

2-year

A= 19.5	B= 37.3	** 56.8%

47. My overall Crowder experience prepared me for further academic study.

A= 28	B= 55	C= 8	D= 1	E= 4	**83%

2-year

A= 21.8	B= 42.6	** 64.4%
A= 30.4	B= 30.2	** 60.6%
A= 31.5	B= 32.5	** 64%

48. Crowder's courses were academically rigorous, but fair.

A= 20	B= 61	C= 14	D= 2	E= 1	**81%

2-year

A= 21	B= 48.6	** 69.6%
A= 23.3	B= 43.5	** 66.8%

49. I look forward to being a Crowder alumni and graduate.

A= 51	B= 37	C= 3	D= 2	E= 2	**88%